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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INL/AEE, AF/W AND PM

TREASURY FOR ATF INTERNATIONAL TRAINING BRANCH (CLOWRY)

CUSTOMS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING DIVISION

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KCRM](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: FIREARMS INTERDICTION TRAINING A HIT

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- Protect Accordingly.

1.(U) SUMMARY: A September 23-27 course on firearms and explosives identification and interdiction conducted in Katsina by ATF and U.S. Customs trainers will help support Nigeria's border controls and its commitment to the ECOWAS Moratorium on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Fifty-five law enforcement officers from five agencies stationed in Nigeria's seven northern states with international borders, attended the course funded by INL and organized by the INL office in Nigeria. Remaining INL funds for the ATF effort will be used for a course in Lagos for border security officials stationed in the southern states and possibly a third iteration with a regional scope to include border security officials from Togo, Benin, Ghana, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND -- THE ECOWAS CONTEXT

2.(SBU) The ATF/U.S. Customs course is a product of consultations between the Embassy and the GON's Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa (MCIA), which coordinates an interagency body to implement the 1998 ECOWAS Moratorium on Small Arms and Light Weapons. In addition to interdiction of illegal weapons, this body -- the National Committee on Small Arms (NATCOM) -- seeks to create national mechanisms for licensing and tracing legally-owned firearms and conducting educational campaigns to curb the use of weapons in communal or other internal conflicts in Nigeria. During an introductory meeting in early 2002, the NATCOM highlighted for RNLEO the need for physical security training to strengthen interdiction efforts at the country's land borders. Support from INL and ATF's International Training Branch helped reprogram existing INL training funds to meet this need.

KATSINA -- THE SETTING

3.(U) During an early August assessment visit to Abuja, senior ATF trainer Patrick Clowry, RNLEO and NATCOM members selected Katsina as the best venue for the training of security officials in Nigeria's northern region. Katsina offered a large, relatively well-equipped hotel and is centrally located among the seven states forming Nigeria's northern geopolitical zone -- Borno, Kebbi, Katsina, Sokoto, Zamfara, Jigawa, and Yobe States. No participating state was more than a five-hour drive from Katsina, and taken together from the perimeter of Nigeria's expansive northern borders.

4.(U) Participants were selected from key law enforcement agencies charged with interdicting arms and contraband at land borders and stationed in the seven states -- the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the Nigeria Police and the State Security Service (SSS). The USG trainers adjusted to the remoteness of Katsina and attendant challenges with good spirit and participants repeatedly thanked them for making the journey to Katsina.

5.(U) This was the first ever USG law enforcement project held in Katsina was warmly welcomed by the State Governor and local officials. In an opening statement, the Secretary to the State Governor underscored Nigeria's serious problem of violent crime, which has been fueled by smuggled weapons. He also noted the connection between weapons trafficking and terrorism, expressing solidarity with the USG's fight against terrorism, marked by the first anniversary of the September 11 attacks two weeks earlier.

## COURSE CONTENT

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6.(U) ATF trainers Clowry, Jeffrey McGee, Eugene Fleming and U.S. Customs agents Carolyn Okafor and Ronald Branch alternated in presenting course sessions on: identifying types of weapons most often smuggled in the region and tracing (when possible) their origins; concealment techniques; searching vehicles and cargo; explosives components and identification; and methods of interdicting and disarming guns and small arms traffickers.

7.(U) On September 26 participants and trainers boarded buses for a practical exercise in nearby Jibiya, Katsina State -- the Nigerian Government's busiest border post with Niger. At Jibiya, the U.S. Customs agents, using a borrowed vehicle from the NDLEA, demonstrated possible concealment methods for smuggling weapons into Nigeria by vehicle over land borders.

## NIGER OFFICIALS MAKE A CAMEO APPEARANCE

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8(U) Customs officials from Niger were present at the opening of this practical exercise and Nigerien Central Inspector Mohammed A. Abdourahamane expressed interest (speaking in Hausa, the common language of the region) in expanded border control cooperation with Nigeria and in assistance from the USG. The USG team discovered that current cooperation among Customs, Immigration and other security officials of the two countries is limited because of the lack of telephone lines on either side of the border. The American visitors expressed hope that a future iteration of the course could be offered to regional participants, of which Niger officials would play a key role. Chad would also be a prime candidate.

## COMMENT AND KUDOS

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9.(SBU) Delivering this course near the heart of Northern Nigeria in a city with a small but noticeable fundamentalist presence (reported septel) provided considerable logistical and security challenges but proved to be key in enhancing the impact of the training. By bringing training in the field, instead of asking trainees to travel to Abuja or Lagos, the ATF/USCS course was able to capture a larger number of working-level security agents who can best use these interdiction skills. This also allowed for substantial savings in costs, which would have been 50-100% higher in Abuja or Lagos. The Embassy wishes to thank U.S.-based ATF trainers Patrick Clowry, Jeffrey McGee and Eugene Fleming and U.S. Customs trainer Carolyn Okafor for their professionalism strong commitment and collegial attitude, and hopes that they can return for the second iteration of the course in Lagos in December or January.

JETER